

The Sea and the Soil

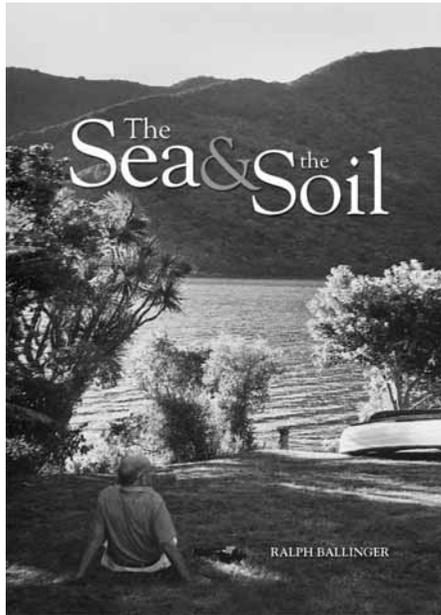
By Ralph Ballinger

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Reviewed by Judith Gillies



Few Lincoln alumni can claim to be still writing and publishing books in their nineties, as 1940 B Ag Science graduate Ralph Ballinger can. Ballinger has a long personal and professional association with the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture, serving for many years on the executive then as Chairman and President. Among other awards, he received an OBE in 1978 for his services to horticulture and was made an Associate of Honour of the RNZIH in 1987.

However, it is not just the inspirational feat of publishing his memoirs at aged 91 that makes Ballinger's book such an interesting read. In this autobiographical journey the author also parallels New Zealand's horticultural development in the second half of the 20th century. After graduating from Lincoln, he served in World War 2 and was seconded to participate in seed production

research in England. This pivotal move was the instigation for his subsequent work when he returned to New Zealand after the war and pioneered several horticultural industries including asparagus production and even New Zealand's only ever commercial poppy (and opium) production.

While a noted figure in horticultural circles throughout New Zealand, Ballinger's biggest presence has been in Marlborough where his contribution to horticulture and life-story unfolds as a not-so-typical but quintessential New Zealand, story. It is a story of family fun, holidays in the Marlborough Sounds and the challenges of horticultural endeavours.

The title of the book, *The Sea and The Soil*, is inspired by Ballinger's poignant belief, after a lifetime associated with both, that we must nurture and conserve them, or not, at our peril.